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I. Internal Developments

Political activity in January was marked by a somewhat more restrained air as most major elements seem to be anticipating the Nawroz (Afghan New Year, March 21) holiday when major government changes are strongly rumored to be in the offing. The regime continues to devote most of its energies to internal security, but some new laws and initiatives are being announced and Daoud himself is slowly but increasingly emerging as the major and less subject to challenge power in the government. As the months pass, the Central Committee is heard from less and less and Parchamist (quasi pro-Soviet Communist Party) influence in the various Ministries, which, after the July coup, was in the forefront, is being brought back into balance by appointment of more moderate, Western-oriented officials. It now appears that most major sectors of the Afghan polity have accepted the fact of Daoud's rule; however, there remains a great deal of difference between general control and being able to translate that control into effective government activity and programs capable of stimulating the economy and developing the nation. The latter has not yet occurred and grumbling over unfilled promises, high prices and shortages are growing. If Daoud is unable to break away from what he obviously feels to be a continued need for almost exclusive concentration on internal security, popular discontent - coupled with a stagnant economy - could

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become a strong disruptive force which some continuing centers of opposition might be able to channel to their own benefit in the continuing power struggle.

It is widely rumored that Nawroz will see a replacement of several of the more incompetent, leftist-leaning Ministers, originally forced upon Daoud by the Central Committee. E
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Although still shrouded in secrecy, the government is apparently working hard on a new Constitution for the Republic. Evidently, conflicting drafts based on Socialist and Western-type models have been proposed by contending groups; and the ideological thrust of the final product should be a fairly accurate barometer of the relative strength of the opposing factions.

Sentences for the last two groups of individuals involved in the alleged Mafwandval coup of last September were announced on January 9 and 31. No further large scale roundups have occurred; but stories continue to circulate of unrest and discontent among the Hazara minority. The regime is still keeping a very close eye upon the mullahs for any signs of organized opposition.

Acting on a Presidential Decree, the Ministry of Interior has begun a well-publicized campaign to issue new identity cards to all citizens over the age of 6. Registration has started in Kabul and the provincial capitals, and if carried out effectively will provide the regime for the first time with an accurate estimate of the number of its citizens. To encourage those who have been avoiding the compulsory military service requirement, temporary freedom from prosecution for "draft dodgers" has been granted to all those signing up for the new identification cards. It will be interesting to see how far the government carries the registration drive, as all previous efforts have failed to penetrate much beyond the major cities, and certainly not to the still uncounted nomads.

The first land distribution plan of the Republican regime was announced on January 30 with some 843 families receiving some 9000

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Jeribs (4,500 acres) from the Nangarhar Valley Development Authority. The beneficiaries were all members of the Shinwari Tribe and rumors promptly began to circulate that the government was attempting to placate the tribesmen who are in opposition to the regime, because one of their members (Aref Shinwari) had been executed for taking part in the Maiwandwal coup plot.

A new traffic law was announced on January 16, followed by a revised Police-Gendarmerie Law on January 19 and the long delayed Customs Law on January 20. Publication of the Customs Law especially had been dragging on for about a year, and, hopefully, should clear the way for release of the new tariff code which, if interpreted liberally, should do much to support the growth of a modern industrial sector.

On January 20, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by diplomatic note announced the imposition of stricter controls over the informational and cultural activities of foreign diplomatic missions in Afghanistan. The restrictions as announced require prior approval for almost the full range of USIS activities, but we are hopeful of being able to arrive at a "working arrangement" that will allow the program to function without undue censorship and delay. We have been told in private that the new regulations are actually a "liberalized" version of much more restrictive measures that the Shafiq government had intended to propose and that President Daoud had rejected the original draft and called for a re-examination of the proposal. We also have been given to understand that a prime purpose of the new regulations is to curtail the vituperative propaganda now being carried on between the Soviet and Chinese bulletins.

Continuing the drive to restore administrative machinery altered by the King since Daoud's 1963 departure, the government announced that the Department of Government Property & Land Settlement in the Ministry of Interior has been split up and the Lands division transferred back to the Ministry of Finance as it was during Daoud's previous tenure.

II. Foreign Affairs

A) Soviet Union:

The annual renewal of the Soviet Afghan Bilateral Trade Agreement was negotiated during the January visit of a Soviet

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Economic Delegation; but signing of the document will be done later in Moscow. The Afghans were hoping that the Soviets would hold the line on prices of petroleum products (the USSR supplies some 70-80% of Afghanistan's needs); but, to achieve this, they might have to give up their demands for a substantial increase in the price of their natural gas. In light of the world energy situation, and other demands on Soviet petroleum supplies, the solution of this aspect of the negotiations could have a significant political impact on relations between the two countries.

B) Pakistan:

Tensions between the two have receded somewhat as both sides appear to have backed down a bit, at least to the extent of not going out of their way to purposely irritate the other. Bhutto obviously does not want the Pashtunistan issue to interfere in any way with the February Lahore Islamic Summit Conference; and Daoud appears to have realized that at least for the short run, Bhutto intends to remain firm in his intention to bring the frontier areas under closer government control, and there is little he (Daoud) can do about it right now.

C) Yugoslavia:

A new Educational and Cultural Cooperation program was signed on January 14. Yugoslavia will provide four scholarships a year in addition to films and artistic group presentations.

D) Iran:

Deputy Foreign Minister Wahid Abdullah visited Iran on January 29 as the last stop on his Eastern European-Middle East swing. He met with Prime Minister Hoveyda, Foreign Minister Khalatbary, and former Ambassador to Afghanistan Foroughi. Abdullah was the first high-level Afghan official to visit Iran since the July coup and the meetings have resulted in a visible relaxation of tension. An Afghan economic delegation has since gone to Tehran to discuss an Iranian offer of a transit agreement for Afghan goods.

E) Kuwait:

Abdullah also stopped in Kuwait and appears to have come away with the impression that the Kuwaitis are willing to provide substantial economic assistance to the Daoud regime. A high-level mission is expected in Kabul shortly to discuss specifics.

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F) Czechoslovakia:

During Abdullah's visit to Czechoslovakia, a new Cultural Treaty was signed for 1974-75 but no details are yet available. The agreement most likely calls for the usual scholarships and artistic exchanges.

III. Comings and Goings

A) A delegation from the Academy of Sciences of Soviet Tajikistan visited Kabul for several days and was hosted by Minister of Education Pazhwak as President of the Afghan-Soviet Friendship Society. The visit was part of the cultural exchange program between the two countries.

B) Abdul Wali Khan, leader of the National Awami League Party of Pakistan, was in Kabul from January 10-20 and was given the "red carpet" treatment by the Daoud government. The ostensible purpose of his visit was for treatment of a chronic eye problem, but while here, Wali Khan met with President Daoud and other senior officials. The Afghans are keeping quiet about the substance of their discussions with Wali and for the moment, the Pashtunistan issue is relatively quiet, -- that is, on the surface.

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